

Archival Research and Combined Insights between Historical Institutionalism & Institutional Works as Methodological Lense: Example of Reconstructing Thailand's Energy Transition (2002–2012)

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Abstract

Since social issues can be explored through various methodological lenses, each provides different insights into their evolution and persistence. Unconventionally, this article employs archival research — known for its robustness in tracing change and development over time — alongside theoretical perspectives from lock-in mechanisms and path disruption to explore Thailand's energy transitions. By capitalizing on the synergy between theoretical insights and systematic procedures, this study puts forward a methodologically grounded account of institutional theory for unveiling the complex and enduring processes of energy transitions. In doing so, it approaches the question of how actors in Thailand's energy sector have interacted over time in advancing renewable energy initiatives. As a series of events unfolded and data were coded from descriptive to pattern levels, three findings were derived from a reconstruction of historical narrative. However, these are intended to illustrate a methodological contribution, rather than to offer context-independent conclusions. First, while collaborative efforts among proponents were forged to disrupt institutional carbon lock-in, internal competition also emerged as actors sought to lead and benefit from the transition. This inevitably resulted in recurring tensions, compounded by misalignment between broader socio-economic policies and renewable energy initiatives. Second, political rhetoric and external pressure played crucial roles in negotiating those tensions and sustaining momentum. Third, a continuous [re-]configuration of the key involved parties was found to be indispensable for maintaining progress. This dynamism would likely be overlooked if a transition were explored solely through a positivist paradigm. The paper encourages scholars to craft or re-design their methodologies in alignment with the evolving nature of social issues and theoretical perspectives.

Keywords: Archival Research, Energy Transition, Historical Institutionalism, Institutional Work, Process

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การวิจัยเชิงเอกสารและการบูรณาการกรอบคิดสถาบันเชิงประวัติศาสตร์และกลไกเชิงสถาบันในเชิงระเบียบวิธี : ตัวอย่างการวิเคราะห์กระบวนการเปลี่ยนผ่านพลังงานของไทย (2545-2555)

สันติ จินตมานะสกุล¹

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บทคัดย่อ

ประเด็นทางสังคมสามารถศึกษาได้ผ่านหลากหลายระเบียบวิธี ซึ่งแต่ละวิธีเปิดมุมมองที่แตกต่างกันต่อการพัฒนาการและความคงอยู่ของปรากฏการณ์นั้น ๆ งานวิจัยนี้เลือกประยุกต์ใช้การวิจัยเชิงเอกสารจดหมายเหตุ ซึ่งมีจุดแข็งในการติดตามการเปลี่ยนแปลงในระยะยาว ผสานกับกรอบแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับกลไกการติดล็อกเชิงสถาบัน (lock-in mechanisms) และการเปลี่ยนแปลงเส้นทางนโยบาย (path disruption) เพื่อตรวจสอบกระบวนการเปลี่ยนผ่านพลังงานของประเทศไทย โดยตั้งคำถามว่า ผู้มีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องในภาคพลังงานไทยมีปฏิสัมพันธ์อย่างไรในการขับเคลื่อนการเปลี่ยนผ่านสู่พลังงานหมุนเวียนในช่วงปี พ.ศ. 2545-2555 จากกรณีศึกษาข้อมูลในเชิงพัฒนาการพบประเด็นสำคัญ 3 ประการ ได้แก่ (1) แม้จะมีความพยายามร่วมกันของกลุ่มผู้สนับสนุนเพื่อแทรกแซงกลไกการติดล็อกคาร์บอน แต่กลับเกิดการแข่งขันภายในกลุ่มเพื่อช่วงชิงบทบาทและผลประโยชน์ ส่งผลให้เกิดความตึงเครียดอย่างต่อเนื่อง โดยเฉพาะเมื่อทิศทางของนโยบายเศรษฐกิจและสังคมไม่สอดคล้องกับเป้าหมายด้านพลังงานหมุนเวียน (2) วาทกรรมทางการเมืองและแรงกดดันจากต่างประเทศมีบทบาทสำคัญในการเจรจาและรักษาแรงผลักดันของการเปลี่ยนผ่านในระยะเริ่มต้น และ (3) การจัดวางและปรับบทบาทของผู้มีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องอย่างต่อเนื่องถือเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในการรักษาความก้าวหน้าของกระบวนการเปลี่ยนผ่าน ซึ่งพลวัตเหล่านี้อาจไม่ถูกมองเห็นหากใช้กรอบระเบียบวิธีแบบประจักษ์นิยม (positivist paradigm) เพียงอย่างเดียว บทความนี้จึงเสนอให้มีการออกแบบหรือปรับระเบียบวิธีวิจัยให้สอดคล้องกับลักษณะที่เปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างต่อเนื่องของประเด็นทางสังคมและพัฒนาการของทฤษฎีที่เกี่ยวข้อง ทั้งนี้เพื่อนำไปสู่ความเข้าใจที่ลึกซึ้งและครอบคลุมยิ่งขึ้นเกี่ยวกับกระบวนการเปลี่ยนผ่านในบริบทเชิงสถาบัน

คำสำคัญ : การวิจัยเชิงเอกสาร, การเปลี่ยนผ่านพลังงาน, กรอบคิดสถาบันเชิงประวัติศาสตร์, กลไกเชิงสถาบัน, กระบวนการ

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Introduction

This research article is inspired by John Levi Martin's works, *Thinking through Theory* (2014) and *Thinking through Methods* (2017), which emphasize the importance of theoretical reasoning and the adaptability of methodological approaches in social science research. Martin contends that theory should primarily serve to make sense of the complexities of the social world, rather than function as a rigid explanatory framework (Martin, 2014). Similarly, he urges scholars to move beyond predetermined research pathways and instead critically reassess and adapt their methodological choices in response to the evolving dynamics of their subject matter (Martin, 2017). Integrating these perspectives helps ensure that social phenomena are neither oversimplified nor "forced to fit" into pre-existing theoretical models, nor constrained by familiar, routine methodological approaches. Rather, it calls for a reflective process in which the interaction between theory and method is carefully considered to more effectively capture the evolving complexity of the issues under study.

Martin's perspective also resonates with ideas presented in the London School of Economics (LSE) lecture "Too Much Math, Too Little History: The Problem of Economics" (2016), which called for a re-examination of how academic subjects are studied — and, crucially, how they should be rebalanced in light of diverse epistemologies. This underscores the need to challenge conventional wisdom and to seek alternatives to methodological orthodoxy by critically rethinking how methods are constructed and justified. Such a process can be considered both an art and a science: an *art*, because it requires creatively weaving together paradigms, subjects, and issues that may lack obvious common ground; and a *science*, because this integration must be approached in a systematic and rigorous manner. For example, reflecting on critiques of the case study approach — such as its tendency to fragment data — Sunday et al. (2020) addressed these limitations by combining fragmented data analysis with the strengths of narrative inquiry. In doing so, they produced a nuanced account of professional development — a "twist-and-turn" story rich in depth and insight. Similarly, Easterby-Smith et al. (2013) emphasize that methodological (re)design involves not merely assembling techniques and tools, but doing so in a coherent and systematic manner. Importantly, as Rule and John (2015) argue, this process must be grounded in the nature of the issues under study and anchored in an appropriate theoretical framework.

Building on this methodological reflection, Saraji and Streimikiene's (2023) **systematic literature review and research agenda** on the low-carbon energy transition reveals that studies published between 2006 and 2023 have remained largely oriented toward **quantitative approaches** — particularly mathematical and economic modeling

(Schinko and Komendantova, 2016; Li et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020; Feng et al., 2023) — as well as **statistical analysis** (Urba and Nordensvärd, 2018; Rogge and Dutschke, 2018; Baek et al., 2019). In contrast, relatively fewer studies are grounded in paradigms informed by **social constructionism** (Pilpola and Lund, 2018; Sovacool et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2020). However, this is not to suggest that the energy transition has been neglected by **qualitative research** or that such approaches lack the capacity to reveal the complexities of transitional processes. In fact, qualitative methodologies have been employed in critical areas, particularly in examining the **acceleration or deceleration** of transition processes (e.g., Geels, 2011; Kucharski and Unesaki, 2018; Roberts and Geels, 2019; Neij and Nemet, 2022). Yet, there remains a concern that in some cases these methods may have been applied somewhat **ritualistically**, both in framing and in approaching the issues under investigation. **A summary table** provided by Saraji and Streimikiene (2023), which includes columns on "research gap" and "methods," offers two key insights into this field. First, energy transitions can be examined through two distinct but interrelated perspectives: **“project” delivery** (Tankha et al., 2010; Criscuolo and Menon, 2015; Gouldson et al., 2015; Barroco and Herrera, 2019; Sainati et al., 2020; Raghutla et al., 2021) and **“process” unfolding** (Feurtey et al., 2016; Leiren and Reimer, 2018; Cheung et al., 2019; Winskel and Kattirtzi, 2020; Jacobson and Graf, 2021). Second, even within studies that focus on process unfolding, there is considerable variation in methodological design — influenced by **philosophical stance**, the **interaction between theory and method**, and the **nature of the issues** being explored (Creswell et al., 2009; Silverman, 2010).

Informed by these reflections, this study approaches energy transition in Thailand as a socially constructed and contested phenomenon—where power dynamics, institutional interests, and shifting policy contexts converge and evolve over time (Winskel and Kattirtzi, 2020). Rather than unfolding linearly, transitions are driven by actors seeking to create, preserve, or dismantle institutional arrangements that underpin industrial and technological systems (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). As Smil (2017) observes, the process is inherently complex—marked by multiple institutional actors, iterative meaning-making, and changes in political leadership—and enduring, due to its persistent and path-dependent character. Against this backdrop, the study examines how actors in Thailand’s energy sector have interacted over time to advance renewable energy initiatives, using institutional theory and archival analysis to disentangle the evolving configuration of interests, tensions, and adaptations that shape transition pathways.

The subsequent sections of this article are structured as follows. It begins with a section on **methodological framing**, which reconsiders how Thailand’s energy

transition has been studied. This section highlights the need for **alternative epistemological approaches** and critiques the limitations of the conventional **positivist paradigm** in capturing the complexities of transition processes. The article then presents the **rationale** for integrating insights from **historical institutionalism** and **institutional work**, in combination with the analytical strengths of **archival research**. The following **research design and methodology** section outlines the study's overarching principles, data collection strategies, and analytical procedures — all guided by the chosen theoretical framework. This leads into a section on **reconstructing the narrative**, which offers key insights into Thailand's energy transitions. It should be noted that these findings are intended as an **illustrative case**, rather than the central focus of the article. Finally, the paper concludes with a section on **discussion and concluding remarks**, reflecting on the study's methodological contributions and implications for future research.

Methodological Framing: Rethinking the study of Thailand's energy transition

Although Thailand's energy transition has been promoted in successive government energy policies over the past two decades, the program remains considerably **unstable** in several respects — including its overall direction, implementation strategy, and implications for certain heavy industries and their associated supply chains (TDRI Insight, 2018). Much of this instability appears to stem from a **lack of coordination** between public and private sectors, along with persistent **policy uncertainty** and **discontinuity** (Sirasoontorn and Koomsup, 2017). Yet, as KPMG (2020) emphasizes, it is the **implementation** of sustainable energy initiatives — not merely policy (re)design — that ultimately determines their success. Two important concepts are particularly relevant to understanding these dynamics. The first is **path dependency** (Campbell, 2010), which constrains policy options through **self-reinforcing mechanisms**. The second is **policy change**, viewed through the lens of **institutional work**, which involves the processes of **disrupting, creating, and maintaining** institutional arrangements (Lawrence et al., 2009). Tensions are therefore an inherent feature of transition processes, arising from the clash between **institutional persistence** and **pressures for change**. In this context, Lockwood et al. (2017) explored whether specific **institutional configurations** can facilitate more rapid sustainable energy transitions. Likewise, past transitions have been analyzed both independently and holistically, with the aim of distilling lessons to inform future pathways (Fouquet and Pearson, 2012; Grubler, 2012). As North (2011) famously argued, **institutions** represent the “rules of the game,” while **organizations** are the

players. Thus, a transition toward renewable energy entails the emergence of **new rules** that fundamentally reshape the operating environment of Thailand's energy sector. To fully comprehend the **dynamics** and **resistances** inherent in this transition, it is essential to adopt a **historical perspective** — one that traces the evolution of institutional (re)configurations over time and reconceptualizes the energy transition not as an abrupt or dramatic shift, but as a **gradual, path-dependent process**.

For Thailand, over the years energy sector has been largely influenced by the following institutional actors – government agencies (e.g., office of prime minister, ministry of energy, ministry of industry and ministry of transport), SOEs (e.g., EGAT, MEA and PEA), private sector companies, international organizational bodies (e.g., foreign investors, lobbyists) including national/international organizational civil societies. Some of them prefer a status quo or at least retard a transition process whereas other proponents seek to accelerate it. Institutions governing the energy sector differently affect resource allocations and that winning coalitions benefit more than others whilst peripheral actors are thus likely to up against a new institutional arrangement (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Ontologically, a transition towards renewables has been fashioned, interpreted, reinterpreted, and pursued or even enacted differently by different institutional actors who have had a variety of degree in accessing to power and resources. This arguably means the issue is far too complex to be conventionally studied only from a positivist paradigm likes causes and effects or those measurable and statistical design. Thereby, a more interpretive philosophical stance likes a social constructivist epistemology is needed. It allows researchers to understand how the concept came to be meaningful and accepted for some but opposed by others. This could be further enriched by an historical perspective justified previously as aforementioned above. This is due to today's and tomorrow's choices are largely be shaped by the past events – history matters Chang (2014) and North (2011). Even more importantly, by understanding multiple pasts that gave rise to our conflict present can be useful for a future decision – making process (Guldi and Armitage, 2014).

For example, Roy and Schaffartzik (2021) examined the case of a coal complex—an intricate web of stakeholders wielding influence to shape the pace and direction of energy transitions. Their study traced the unfolding of competing agendas as actors sought to introduce new institutions, uphold established practices, or dismantle outdated structures within the industrial and technological landscape. By organizing developments chronologically and coding them qualitatively, the study exposed a central paradox in India's energy pathway: rhetorical commitments to renewables coexisted with a persistent reliance on coal. Building on this

reconceptualization of energy transitions as socially constructed and historically embedded processes, this article turns its attention to Thailand. Through a similar lens, it explores how key actors have engaged, struggled, and re-aligned over time in shaping the country's renewable energy journey—highlighting how tensions emerged, recurred, and were at times renegotiated or resolved in the shift from resistance to acceptance.

Theoretical perspectives: Combined Insights between Historical Institutionalism and Institutional Work

Understood as rules, norms, and practices that organize and constitute processes of social interactions, institutional theory and especially with its longitudinal orientation is arguably relevant with the studies on energy transition processes, at least for three reasons. First, its emphasis on the three pillars 'elastic' fibers that guide behaviors and resist change (Scott, 2008). Secondly, an interplay between exogenous shocks and endogenous movement in explaining institutional change (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Finally, the institutional legitimacy where its focus is centered on how the institutional logics are dynamically legitimized and [de-] legitimized (Thornton et. al., 2012). Yet, such a characteristic as 'preserving status quo' together with its extended focus on 'change process' seem to theoretically bare resemblance to the problems facing energy transitions – resistance and acceptance, including how the energy policies have been legitimized. Moreover, since a transition process is inherently '*complex*' - various actors involved, reinterpretation of meaning and shifts in governmental initiatives – and '*enduring*' as evidenced by persistence and lock – in, aforementioned characteristics of institution are likely to be applicable to this field of studies as suggested by numerous scholars (see e.g. Zhang and Speed, 2020, Dragomir et. al., 2023).

Building upon the above foundation, this research integrates insights from *historical institutionalism* (see, e.g., Robert & Geels, 2019; Speed, 2016; Hatani, 2016; Notteboom et al., 2013; North, 2011) and *institutional work* (see, e.g., Lawrence et al., 2009; Anderson & Gadolin, 2020; Graft & Jacobsen, 2021; Spijkerboer et al., 2021; Lohr et al., 2022) to better understand the journey from resistance to acceptance in Thailand's energy transitions. While the former examines how institutions reinforce themselves — often conceptualized through path dependencies and lock-in mechanisms — the latter extends this theoretical frontier by focusing on how old institutional patterns can be disrupted, and how new ones are created and maintained. Policy, though often perceived primarily as a *regulative pillar*, also binds expectations and shared logics. It is frequently crafted to benefit incumbent institutions and actors

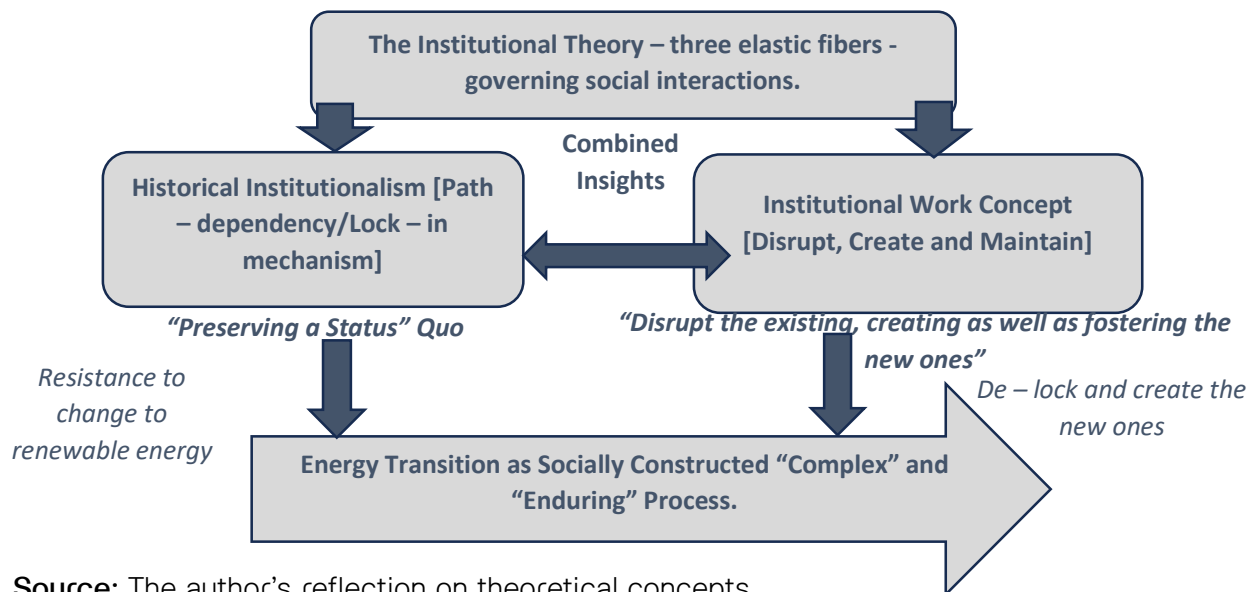
over extended periods, often under the guise of reducing uncertainty; thus, policy change tends to be rare (Ashworth et al., 2010). Nevertheless, other actors may seek to influence and reshape policy trajectories. As such, changing energy policy inevitably involves successive rounds of political struggle and cannot be disentangled from broader social and economic developments. In this context, Thelen (1999) argued that "historical institutionalism can help examine political and economic development in historical context and in terms of processes unfolding over time and in relation to each other, within a broader context in which developments in one realm impinge on and shape developments in others." Similarly, Lockwood et al. (2017) suggested that historical institutionalism is particularly suitable for studying the politics of sustainable energy transition. First, it situates the socio-technical dimensions of transitions within political contexts, allowing researchers to trace how policy outcomes either accelerate or hinder the process. Second, as a series of events unfold, the *configuration* and *reconfiguration* of institutional arrangements before, during, and after policy implementation can be systematically observed. With this in mind, Leiren and Reimer (2018) employed this framework to explore Germany's shift from a feed-in tariff system to an auction-based approach in renewable energy policy. The historical institutionalist lens enabled them to understand how the previous policy path had been reinforced for decades before being destabilized by a triggering event — changes to the EU Commission's state-aid guidelines in 2014. In this respect, history matters: the lessons drawn from the past inform present struggles and successes, which remain deeply connected to historical developments (Chang, 2014; North, 2011).

Unlike its theoretical counterpart, institutional work refocuses attention on the processes through which actors influence the institutional arrangements within which they operate. As Zietsma and McKnight (2009) noted: "Not all institutional environments are highly institutionalized, and not all actors are equally constrained by institutional arrangements. [...] Some actors may arise to question such arrangements, resist them strategically, and reconstruct them to suit the desires of different actors." Institutional work encompasses processes of creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions (Lawrence et al., 2009). In this study, particular emphasis is placed on disruption as an initial step, which precedes the creation and maintenance of new institutional arrangements for renewable energy. This is precisely where institutional arrangements previously designed for a fossil fuel-based energy system compete with emerging arrangements for renewable energy, both seeking legitimacy. Recurring tensions are thus an inherent feature of renewable energy initiatives. For some researchers, the entire process — from disruption to the maintenance of new institutions — is the central focus of their studies (see, e.g., Graft and Jacobsen, 2021;

Lohr et al., 2022). Others, however, concentrate on particular aspects of the process, such as creating new arrangements (Zietsma and McKnight, 2009) or institutional maintenance (Zilber, 2006). Nonetheless, compared to other theoretical perspectives, the concept of institutional work has been applied relatively infrequently (Bolton et al., 2016), despite its valuable introduction of agency into what is typically regarded as a highly institutionalized sector.

Figure 1

Combined Insights between HI and Institutional Work



Source: The author's reflection on theoretical concepts

Figure 1 presents a synthesized conceptual framework that combines insights from Historical Institutionalism (HI) and the Institutional Work perspective. This integration is designed to capture both the structural constraints shaped by enduring institutional legacies and the agency-driven practices through which actors seek to create, maintain, or disrupt institutional arrangements. While HI foregrounds the role of path-dependency, critical junctures, and the layered evolution of institutions over time, the Institutional Work lens complements this by focusing on the everyday actions, strategies, and meanings through which institutional change is enacted. Together, they offer a dynamic analytical scaffolding that enables this study to trace the unfolding of Thailand's energy transition as a contested and iterative process — shaped by historical continuities yet also open to transformation through strategic interventions by diverse actors.

For this study, a holistic analysis of institutional work – *'institutional work to disrupt institutions'*, *'institutional work to create institutions'* and *'institutional work to*

maintain institutions' (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) – was adopted to fully explore an ongoing process of energy transitions, often unfolded not in a linear way. In fact, it is quite discursive as a result of the struggles among actors within which ones try to introduce and enact new energy initiatives and others seek to retain existing. Implicitly if not explicitly, there is a shift here of research focus towards roles of the actors in [re-] shaping institutions, not just conform to an isomorphic pressure. Bolton et al., (2016) for example, examine how institutional actors in the UK electricity both incumbents and change proponents negotiated and created more opportunities for low carbon investment. This focus on the agency of actors is seen as complementary to a concept of critical junctures such as work conducted by Wakiyama et al., (2014) on Fukushima nuclear crisis as exogenous shock for a low carbon energy transition. Hence, in addition to centering on exogenous shocks that opens up opportunities for institutional changes, encompassing endogenous activities of the actors that incrementally alter and stabilize the institutional settings is arguably a refinement of the frame. This is in line with a remark made by Fuenfschilling and Truffer (2016) “energy transitions can be explained clearer by examining more closely at the concrete activities of the actors shaping them as a transformation of the sector is caused by the interplay between institutions and actors including technologies”. In this respect, institutional work has been suggested as an ideal framework for studying sustainability transitions – how change processes occur (Beunen and Patterson, 2019).

As it has already been mentioned earlier, there are three institutional pillars that can be worked upon by actors: the regulative (rules and laws), the normative (norms) and the cultural - cognitive (beliefs and meanings), these all contribute to the existence of institution (Scott, 2008). The attention here in this study is placed not only on regulative pillars alone either as accelerator or retarding mechanism for energy transition. Efforts are also put on the normative and cultural - cognitive pillars of actors involved in the process of transitions: the messy day – to – day practices of actors as well as the discursive dynamics – how perspectives, ideas, and beliefs are communicated (Narvanen et al., 2021). Two strands of institutional theory are used as theoretical framework for the study. Yet historical institutionalism and institutional work perspective with their seemingly different emphasis “path – dependencies/lock – in” and “disrupting, creating and sustaining institutions” respectively can together offer a holistic account of energy transition from resistance to acceptance. In addition, re – occurring tensions among the institutional actors during a transitions process will also be explored in terms of development and easing.

Research Design and Methodology

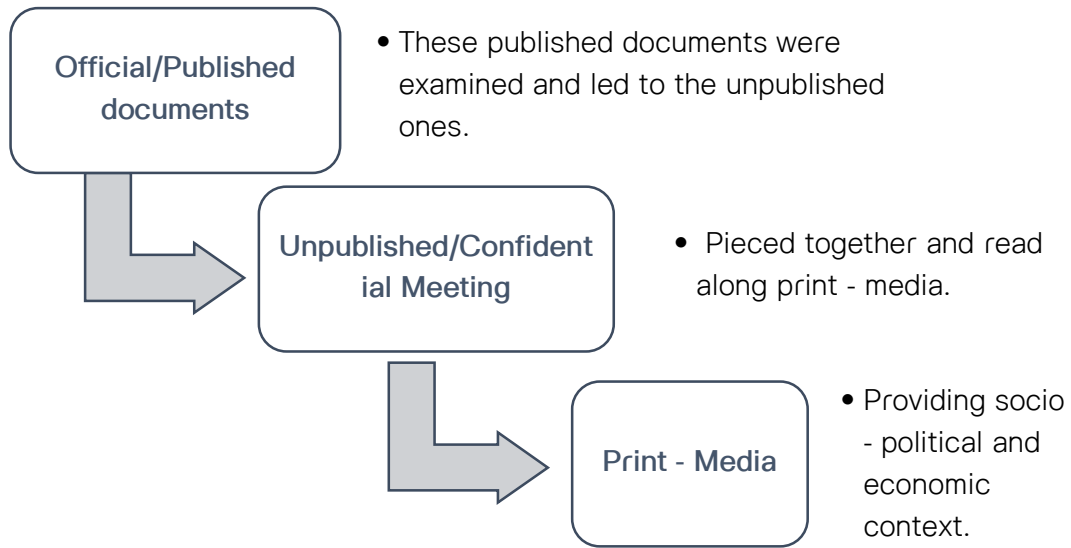
In response to the reframing of Thailand's energy transition as a socially constructed process, research should seek to explore how the social world of energy transition is discursively constructed and maintained through the interactions of various social actors (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). On this ground, archival research is adopted as one of the most in-depth methodological approaches that allows research questions with the focuses upon the past and change over time to be answered whether exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive (Saunders et al, 2009). This can be done through the examination of historical documents and policies being kept in the National Archives. Expectedly, this could yield insights into the discourse and power dynamics surrounding Thailand's energy transitions during a period of research investigation (Silverman, 2010). Hence, archival sedimentations which are part of the institutional fabric of societies must be embraced into the heart of research investigations (Hills, 1993). The archives are believed to be rich of story that could potentially unveil a complexity of social phenomenon as well as a development of institution we witness today (Berg and Lune, 2012). For validity and reliability of findings, a data triangulation was employed, various sources of archives were used to confirm the reliability and validity of information.

Data Collection

Data collection process does not move straight forwardly and neatly. It is, in fact, cycle back and forth between a collection itself and a process of analysis as Hills (1993) notes "In archival work, what you find determines what you can analyze, and what you analyze structures what you look for in further archival collections". This helps facilitating an exploration of how energy transitions are socially constructed and negotiated through interpretations and experiences of individuals involved in a process. Figure no.2 shows how data collection is proceeded from the official and published documents to print – media. And in terms of credibility of data and minimizing the potential of selection bias, archival documents were selected based on three guiding principles: **temporal relevance**, focusing on materials published or produced between 2002 and 2012; **institutional credibility**, where sources were drawn from various governmental bodies, industry stakeholders, and civil society organizations engaged in the energy sector; and **thematic alignment**, ensuring that selected materials associated with key moment of resistance, negotiations or acceptance in transition toward renewable energy (William and Sewell, 2005). This triangulated approach in collecting archival data could help ensuring methodological transparency and strengthening reliability and validity of sources.

Figure 2

Data collection process from published to unpublished documents and print media

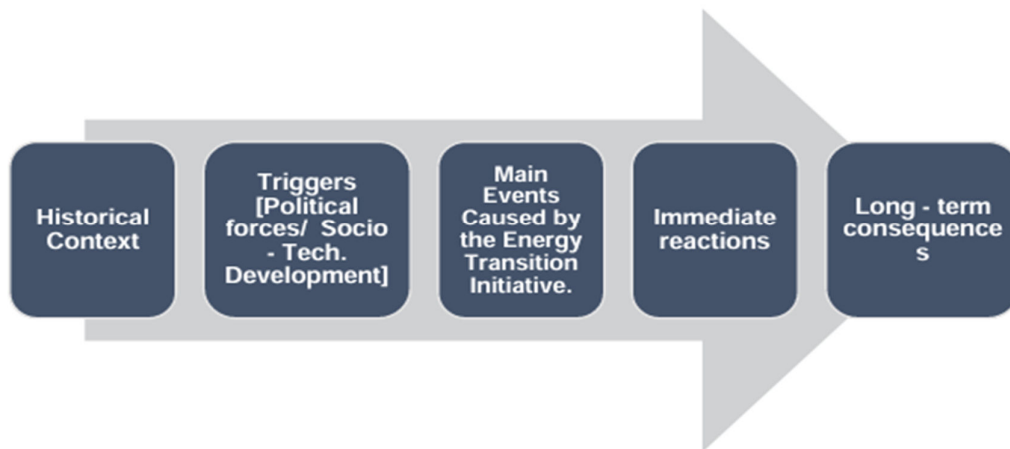


Source: The author's self – compilation.

Having gone through a process of examination - charging those published/official documents with a set of simple but interrogative questions e.g., what were the key events took place before, during and after the initiatives? what change interventions were directly and indirectly resultant of these policies? Who were the key proponents and opponents of that initiative? And how were they interacted; data were chronologically pieced together to unveil a series of events in the energy affairs. Figure no.3 illustrates how the archival data are put together after they were examined.

Figure 3

How the archival data are put together after their examination.



Source: The author's self – compilation.

They were also coded from a level of descriptive to a pattern coding so that further insights into Thailand's energy transitions process can be gained (more discussion on a section of analysis). Figure no. 3 shows a historical narrative of energy transitions in given period, 2002 and 2012.

Data Analysis

A combined insight between historical institutionalism and institutional work concept does not act as a prescription to force fit data into a frame or cherry – picking. Instead, it helps making sense out of data and being able to structure them in a systematic way as part of analysis. That said, a theoretical framework will be used to facilitate the logical steps of interpretive process of qualitative coding ranging from “Descriptive” to “Analytical” and to “Pattern” coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Through an iterative and a systematic comparison and contradiction of collected data, a [re-] construct of narrative account on Thailand's energy transitions together with insights into recurring tensions will be gained as part of lesson learnt for future direction.

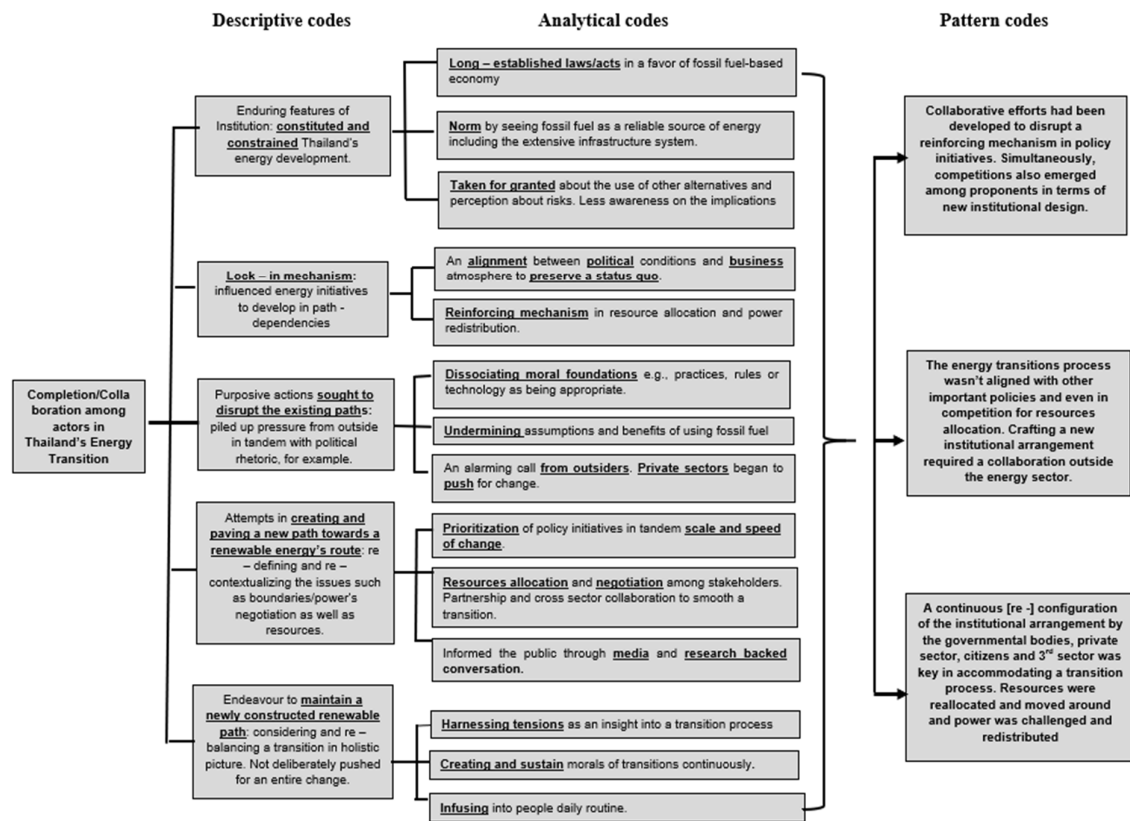
Reconstructing the narrative: key insights in Thailand's energy transitions

A key novelty of this research lies in its *methodological contribution*, which employs archival research in tandem with qualitative coding mechanisms derived from *historical institutionalism* and *institutional work* as its strategy of inquiry. Equally important, the study offers an alternative approach for examining Thailand's energy transition as a *complex* and *enduring* socially constructed process. This methodology is applied to address the central research question: *How did key institutional actors — governmental bodies, the private sector, the third sector, and citizens — interact to foster Thailand's energy transitions between 2002 and 2012?* As a result, a narrative account of Thailand's energy transition was theoretically constructed as follows. **First**, for Thailand to *unlock* itself from a fossil fuel-based economy and move toward renewable energy, collaborative efforts among various stakeholders were required to disrupt the self-reinforcing mechanisms of existing policy initiatives. However, in crafting a new institutional template for the energy sector, competition was also evident — even among proponents of change — as different entities sought to assert influence and maximize their benefits during the transition period. **Second**, the transition process itself did not fully align with other social and economic policies of the time, which in turn triggered competition over the (re)allocation of resources among different ministries. In this context, political rhetoric and external pressures on

Thailand played a crucial role in negotiating tensions and sustaining early momentum for energy reform. **Finally**, a *continuous (re)configuration* of power distribution and resource allocation among the involved parties proved indispensable for maintaining the newly constructed renewable energy pathway. By shifting the research philosophy toward *social constructionism* and redesigning the methodology in line with institutional concepts — as well as the *complex* and *enduring* nature of transition processes — this study’s methodological approach enables the uncovering of layered institutional dynamics and actor interactions that are often overlooked by mainstream analytical perspectives.

Figure 4

Coding architect from descriptive coding to patterning coding where the two theoretical perspectives ‘historical institutionalism’ and ‘institutional work’ were adopted to aid the analysis.



Source: The author’s self – compilation.

Disrupting Carbon Lock – in: collaboration and competitions in fostering Thailand's energy transition

Following a bureaucratic reform of the Thai government, the Ministry of Energy was established in 2002 to unify more than 20 government agencies responsible for energy matters. As a result, the previously scattered and fragmented energy-related initiatives under different ministries were pursued in a more coordinated and systematic way. Establishing this new ministry indicates a significant institutional reform and structural changes rather than just a cosmetic adjustment (Vakulchuk et. al. 2023). Essentially, it was seen as a pragmatic and symbolic act that could help attracting the investors and private sector (Vakulchuk, 2017). Like in other countries, strategic changes in national energy policy are often met with resistance before they are accepted and integrated into society. To address this, collaborative efforts were mobilized not only to dismantle entrenched fossil fuel policies but also to pave the way for increased use of renewable sources and technologies.

Against the backdrop of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, it would have been unrealistic to expect corporations to take a leading role at that time, as many were still grappling with financial difficulties. Politically, it fell to the government to enhance the business climate by supporting corporate investment and involvement in energy matters as part of a long-term national agenda. To achieve this, strong commitments to pursuing a green transition and providing clear signals were essential, not only to offer reassurance but also to help reduce uncertainties caused by shifts in policy direction. In a government statement delivered to Parliament on February 26, 2001, even before the creation of the Ministry of the Environment, the Prime Minister announced that “*The government's attempts are to provide a support for the energy mix ... [...] ... through an increasing use of renewable sources and finance for R&D and technology for Thailand's energy conservation.*”. He then continued by emphasizing the potential contributions of the private sector “*... [...] for Thailand to reduce dependencies on fossil fuels and expanding a national energy mix, private sector investment and innovation are crucial. This government is determined to cut any red – tape, regulation to advocate partnership and joint venture with the businesses on this matter ... [...]*” Both intentions to embark on renewable transitions and a cross – economic sectors collaboration were floated in Parliamentary Meeting on October 7th, 2003 before putting forward more solidly in National Energy Policy Committee [NEPC] Resolution, June 22nd, 2005. As it was indicated “*The government must change their roleplays to induce more involvement from the private sector and providing them necessary supports. Under this new condition, they would be allowed to invest and cooperate with us in a current challenges of Thailand's energy*

landscape". These investments were anticipated to enhance and accelerate the development of alternative energy sources, thereby playing a crucial role in improving Thailand's energy mix (National Energy Policy Committee, November 6, 2006). This period marked the rise of collaborative public-private initiatives, with both parties seemingly agreeing on the evolving and reassessed roles of their contributions to energy matters (Streitferdt et al., 2017).

Cabinet Resolution on 20th August 2004, for example, gave an approval to allow private sector to invest in a greenery power plant project. This helped to galvanize further steps of collaboration across economic settings as remarked in Resolution of the National Energy Policy Committee on April 18th, 2005 chaired by Deputy Prime Minister "... [...] ... *For the 3^d meeting agenda, national energy conservation policy between 2002 and 2011, the committee has agreed to a restructuring of Thailand's energy sector and that include change in law and regulation to facilitate a use of renewable sources ... [...] ... In addition, a use of renewable sources must be encouraged via research funding, collaboration with the corporate sector and crucially a national human resource development... [...]*". Printed on January 25th 2005 Matichon also pointed out that "*despite a technological advancement that has put wind energy and solar panel to compete with oil and gas in business scale and induce the investment in green economy, Thailand was still struggling and wobbling around ... [...] The key issue is not only on a policy dimension. In fact, a structural reform in this sector is also needed as the new institutional templates where everybody must adhere*".

Looking from a theoretical perspective, this move was indispensable for two reasons. First, increasing the share of renewable energy could not be achieved in isolation as if it was proceeding in a vacuum without considering intervening contexts and conditions. In fact, by inducing those who were benefiting from a fossil – fuel-based economy, to jump on the *green* bandwagon could arguably help weakening a status quo of Thailand's energy sector while simultaneously paving the ways for new paths forward. The introduction of Energy Efficiency Revolving Fund [EERF] in 2003, along with increased support from financial institutions was seen as strategy to ensure the private sector about bankability of projects, if they participated. Secondly, this move came not long after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, during which Thailand received a bailout from the IMF before its revival officially declared in 2003. Given these circumstances, continuing with a predominantly public-led energy reform might not have been feasible. Streitferdt (2016) remarked in his research that "the new Ministry of Energy was inclined to work in close cooperation with the private sector, in part, due to the continuing economic recovery in the early 2000s". This can be understood as the focus of energy agenda was on reducing state power and inviting

private sector companies to work as joint – venture partners in the energy sector (Aunphattanasilp, 2018). The agenda was thereafter strengthened as a Very Small Power Producer [VSPP] putting in place by the government enclosed in 2007 the Energy Industry Act.

However, at the same time, competitions among the proponents of reform could surprisingly be witnessed in various inquiry reports. For example, as retrospectively pointed out in Sirisoontorn and Koomsup (2017) that lack of coordination between public and private and weak governance as barriers to energy transition. Each sector was, in fact, contending for influence and control over direction and pace in transforming Thailand to a low carbon society. According to Kasikorn Research Center on sustainability 2008 and a study from Bank of Thailand to trace The Impact of Green Transitions on Thai Economy published in 2023, one critical insight was found “... [..] ... *there would be transition risk involved in putting the policies forward. It can be categorized into three groups which are low, high, and medium transition risk. Businesses in each category are affected to different speed and scale of transition ... [..].*” Businesses in low transition risk such as battery in electric vehicle appeared to advocate an acceleration of transition whereas those who were under a moderate category like construction material industry might not be in favor of that speed. In this regard, competitive environment, where each business in different level of risk exposure competed to wield their influence, was inevitable at the time. Lobbying to slowing down a pace or to accelerate a speed as well as the government subsidies and tax incentives have been and still be controversial areas even among the proponents of transition (Suboticki et al, 2023). That said, like collaboration, competition between the two appeared to shape a trajectory development of renewable energy policy in Thailand during 2000s. In fact, as it will be discussed later either collaboration or competition was regulated and governed in the light of the ERC's existence in 2007. Clearly stated in the Act about roles of ERC “*promote competition in the energy industry and prevent abusive use of dominance in the energy industry operation and to promote fairness and transparency of the service provision of the energy network systems, without unjust discrimination.*” The preceding quote suggests that while collaborative efforts are necessary, there is always a possibility for each entity to compete for its own position and influence in directing the transition. Tensions may arise and persist throughout the transition period. From a scholarly point of view, competition and tension can be argued as generative force for innovation (Anderson and Gadolin, 2020) and transformative power for regulatory reform, respectively (Bellos, 2018; Rodriguez et al, 2021).

In short, although conventional wisdom is centered on fostering collaboration across economic sector or even within their respective domain, harnessing tensions triggered by competition can also be another key factor in transforming Thailand towards a low – carbon society. A parliamentary discussion on VSSP initiative can be the epitome of this unorthodox paradigm *“one of the objectives for launching VSSP was to incentivize those independent and small-scale producers to compete in Thailand’s energy diversification”* (Parliamentary Meeting Report, November, 19, 2007). Under VSSP, competition did occur because of technological advancement along with an introduction of Energy Efficiency Revolving Fund (EERF). In fact, opportunities were further opened - up beyond the races usually seen between the governmental bodies and big corporates or even within the corporate realm themselves (Streitferdt et al, 2017). Observed and commented by the news media *“... [...] the government could make competition fruitful for the energy transitions by various means. But a question is still on adjusting competition rules and regulatory or understand and use tension spurred by a competitive environment ... [...] ... small and medium sized producers must not be marginalized, if a clean energy transition is seriously pursued as they always claim ... [...]”* (Thai Post. “Reforming Energy for the Nation Would Not Be a Hidden Agenda.” August 27, 2014). Comparing to its early days where collaboration appeared to be a panacea for pushing a transition through, over the times policy – makers, governmental bodies and the media began to critically [re-] examine how the actors had involved in a process. Yet, this is hard to deny that there was an interplay between collaboration and competition in fostering Thailand’s energy transition during 2000s.

Negotiating Tension and The Use of Political rhetoric

Tension seemed to be caused not only by competition among the key involved parties to take a leading role in a transition process. In fact, it was also be politically influenced by a misalignment in socio – economic policies. Scholar such as Chiappinelli and May (2022) put it as time – inconsistent renewable energy policies which refers to doing the right things but might not be in a ripe time regarding a context. This could potentially be addressed by negotiation and rhetorical strategies. Both of which shall induce a shift of policy priorities that helped ameliorating tension or even fostered a greater policy alignment (Ollier et al, 2023). In Thailand, there is National Economic and Social Development Board [NESDB] established in 1961 with a key role in providing the five – year national economic and social development plan, and not until its 10th (2007 – 2011) and 11th plan (2012 – 2016) that sustainability and relating issue of renewable energy were emphasized (Sitdhiwej, 2016; Sirisoontorn and Koomsup,

2017). Having looked at a parallel of timelines (2002 – 2012) between the MoE's policy role out and a development of NESDB's plans, chances that energy transition was not fully aligned with other policy initiatives should not be ignored, let alone its comparative priority to the government's portfolios.

Under his premiership from early 2001 to September 2006, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was well recognized for rescuing Thai economy. His achievements included, for example, a financial settle with the IMF loan, a village fund, a suspension of farmers' debt, one Tumbon one Product [OTOP] and 30 THB All Diseases including a Dual Tracks Economy [an overhaul of domestic economic conditions to attract FDI], in which academic scholars and pundits dubbed 'Thaksinomics' (Looney, 2003). Observing his statement to the Parliament in the first term, it is obvious that pursuing the economic revival was placed as a top priority "... [..] ... the urgent tasks and ultimate obligation for the government is to adjust our economic structure, management, politics, and society by doing them simultaneously. These will be proceeded toward 1. Putting an end to a slump of our economy and 2. Addressing and adjusting our economic and social structure to become more stable ... [..] ... the government will also open - up opportunities not only in terms of finance but also knowledge so that they will be equipped for a knowledge-based economy ... " (The Prime minister's statement to the parliament, 26th February 2001). In addition, other urgent and economic policies were put as first and second respectively whereas the energy policy was placed at 9th. Likewise, when he was delivering a statement to the parliament for his 2nd term the achievement of his cabinet ministers over the last four years was portrayed as four years fixing and four years building "*During the first term in office, the government adjusted its approach to addressing the country's issues by implementing parallel policies and strategies. It emphasized stimulating the economy at the grassroots level and supporting small businesses, which helped majority of people, by reducing expenses, increasing income, and expanding opportunities. At the same time, it sought to strengthening the production and service sectors to enhance their competitiveness in the global market, while considering the need for economic stability and focusing on efficient financial management*" (The Prime minister's statement to the parliament, 23th March 2005). Comparing to its counterparts, the policies related to energy and the uses of resources were once again ranked 4th. Yet, this could make Thailand's renewable - pathway bumpier as other fronts of socio – economic advancement was also simultaneously pursued.

A following quote illustrates how a seemingly – uncoordinated raft of policies could instigate tension "... [..] the government is currently facing growing tensions between promoting short – term economic growth through fossil fuels subsidies and

the future trend of renewable sources. While the first one could help maintaining public satisfaction and keep a living cost low, these apparently discourage the investment in renewable energy and led to fiscal constraint ... [...]” (Post Today, 5th October 2005). The PM also noted that *“Various aspects must be properly balanced to ensure that any issue will not be left unchecked”* (Parliamentary Meeting Report, 17th November 2005). Such a seemingly - misalignment between energy reform initiatives and industrial development aimed at enhancing growth could stall Thailand’s energy transition, much like the tensions seen between energy policy and agricultural/rural development (Cabinet Resolution, 6th September 2004; Cabinet Resolution 15th January 2005). Yet, this point of contention was echoed in public media as they might have seen it as another obstacle for renewable transition *“The endeavor for the investment in alternative energy was often put aside, at least for the time being, by other industrial priorities that still fossil – fuel base. Such a misalignment between the two ministries could escalate to a poor coordinated support for renewable energy infrastructure, as the ministry of energy appears to get prioritized to play a part in economic revival”* (Matichon, 21st June 2003). Here, political commitment and regulation must be upheld as being highlighted in the Energy Transition Index (ETI) by World Economic Forum. However, bluntly pushing it through might be inappropriate and yet ineffective, since this could risk escalating tension.

Theoretically, the attempt to put forward energy transition is often involved multiple competing ideas and logics (Ollier et al, 2023). [De-] legitimization of the old/or existing and legitimization of the new ones need more than just a use of rationale arguments (Deephouse and Suchman, 2011). In fact, pathos and ethos as other types of rhetoric are often required as part of legitimization process (Brown et al, 2012). For example, the Alternative Energy Development Plan [AEDP] in 2005 that sought to increase a share of renewable energy in the overall mix. Though it was seen as a crucial step in pushing up a share of renewable uses to around 8% by 2011, the achievement was not only limited to logos (logic) but also extended to pathos (emotional – evoking) and ethos (moralizing). Instead of making a case directly on a rationale basis, the following quote shows that the National Energy Policy Commission [NEPC] under the MoE also deployed pathos rhetoric to cast an overwhelming emotion in society *“As global energy prices continue to skyrocketing and aggravate our inflation issue ... [...] ... to address the living cost of consumers and businesses, the government must be able to effectively control the energy price and yet our reliance on a growing imported fuel has to be re – examined for securing a more independent of our energy future. Our current dependency on fossil fuels has also exposed us to other various issues e.g., natural disasters, lives, and wellbeing ... [...] ...”* (National

Energy Policy Commission, October 22, 2005). Subsequently, an ethos rhetoric (moralizing) was deployed to further mobilize public support “*Our dependence on fossil fuels and coal has contributed to pollution and greenhouse gas, leading to harmful situations on health, communities, and natural resources. Clinging on a status quo might, on the one hand, be justified as for security. But on the other hands, ... [...] ... unlikely to fit with new energy landscape and environmental concerns. The AEDP 2005 is not only for economy but a long – term commitment to health and well – being ... [...]*” (National Energy Policy Commission, January 17, 2006). Widely circulated in news media, this rhetorical maneuver could as well target at Thailand's much reliance on the uses of coal and fossil fuel, for example, Greenpeace Points the State Cancel Coal Power Plants, Bangkok Biz News, August 22, 2002, and The Victims of Mae Moh Power Plant Sue the Administrative Court, Manager, August 30, 2003. Yet, pursuing a renewable energy transition did, in fact, require framing and [re-] framing of the issues to legitimize policy initiatives and mobilize support via various means. While presenting a case with economic reasoning and scientific evidence (logos) is indispensable, defending it only on this ground could lead to a political lock – horn with other ministries and yet escalating tension. Complementarily, therefore embedding pathos and ethos in a transition process can be found helpful for negotiating tension and get a transition going.

Using a rhetorical strategy was not only limited to resolving tension. In fact, it could be further deployed to strengthen a newly - constructed renewable path. In 2007, Very Small Power Producer (VSPP) was set in train and dynamically legitimized through a three interacting and mutually reinforcing types of rhetoric. In terms of rationale behind policy development, logos rhetoric was embedded in the VSPP itself as well as solidified by Energy Industry Act and 10th plan of National Economic and Social Development Plan, simultaneously introduced in that year. Consider the extracted quote from National Energy Policy Committee Resolution, June 19, 2007 “... [...] ... *the program seeks to promote the efficient use of domestic resources, reduce dependence on commercially produced electricity, decrease the costs associated with importing fuels from our neighboring countries, lessen environmental impacts, and help alleviate the investment burden on the government in the electricity production and distribution system ... [...]*”. To enact the VSPP, public support was also garnered by arguing that the program would open - up opportunities for the individual, communities including a relatively small size private sector in producing and selling their electricity “... [...] ... *where the villagers have power to contribute to our needs. Yet, it is not just about generating power but as well building pride and sense of communities up and the down the country... [...] ... the VSPP offers hope and empowering local*

economies ... [...] ...” attracted from Energy Policy and Planning Office, Ministry of Energy’s website). The use of pathos and ethos rhetoric, unlike logos, appeared to target on a piling – up pressure from a group of businesses that benefitted from conventional form of energy. Indeed, it put more weight on the VSSP as standing against a power of big corporates. From the institutionalism perspective, to institutionalize a new logic and get it legitimized it goes far beyond addressing a regulative pillar via a pure coercive mechanism. Other two elastic fibers – normative and cultural cognitive - of institution must be worked on and a rhetorical strategy is found as the effective way accordingly (Thornton et al, 2012).

Continuous [Re-] Configuration of Key Involved Parties

Between 2002 and 2012, it is undeniable that a dynamic (re -) configuration of key institutional actors contributed to the shift from *resistance* to *acceptance* of renewable energy in Thailand. The key institutional actors include governmental bodies (Ministry of Energy, Department of Alternative Energy Development and Efficiency, Energy Policy and Planning Office, Energy Regulatory Commission, and Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand), corporate sector and private investors as well as civil society. They had interacted either in alignment or conflict over their views on renewable energy. An initial configuration (2002 – 2005) can be observed through a decision – making structure and consequences after decisions had been made. Indeed, decision – making power was exercised and (re-) distributed whereas resources were (re -) allocated in the light of transitioning process. As discussed earlier, this was manifest by an establishment of ministry of energy in which more than 20 energy – related bodies were unified and subsequently restructured under the MoE’s umbrella. Though other ministries might still have contributed to Thailand’s energy matters, this initial configuration seemed to place the MoE in the driver’s seat.

Consider the excerpt below taken from Royal Thai Government Gazette (2002) Reorganization of Ministries “*The establishment of Thailand’s Ministry of Energy aimed to centralize a national energy’s management. Prior to this ... [...] ... various agencies were fragmented across multiple ministries. It had led to a lack of coordination and continuity of policy development. This was essential as a response to an urgent call for a clear and sustainable energy policy of our nation.*” Supported by National Energy Policy Council (NEPC) in terms of scope and policy direction and the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) for transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, the MoE then sought to bring renewable energy up around 8 per cent of total primary energy by 2011. This deep structural change in a public sector’s side along with a series of policy initiative: Energy Conservation Promotion Act 2002, Small Power

Producer Programs 2003, and Alternative Energy Development Plan 2005, were the attempts to start de – locking Thailand from carbon – based economy and activities. In addition, other actors that had interacted to reshape Thailand's energy trajectory development was a private sector and the investor, as Streitferdt et al (2017) labelled as a period of *Shared Public/Private Initiative*. “*We [ERC] are preparing to grant licenses for solar and waste – to – energy projects to private investors with a help and after receiving approval from the NEPC*” published in Post Today, February, 8, 2003. Quite explicitly, a call for [re-] configuration of the involved parties to drive the energy transition in Thailand was bolstered in Cabinet Resolution, October 15th 2003 that “*a dynamic and inclusive restructuring of involved parties is essential to overcome inertia and even accelerate our shift towards renewable sources of energy*”. It was not only a symbolic of change but also pragmatically inducing a redistribution of decision – making power and a reallocation of resources to help facilitating a transition process.

However, such an initial configuration was also theoretically prone to a [re -] configuration as a result of an exogenous shock, such as the military coup in 2006 and the global financial meltdown in 2008, as well as endogenous movements by those who might not have benefit from the 2002 round of bureaucratic reform. Whilst the first one could open the opportunity for change to take place, the latter one would gradually exert their influence on a trajectory of change (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). According to Aunphattanasilp (2018) it was once again a period of energy centralization where the key agendas were centered around empowering the MoE and the energy administration bureaucracies. Though power seemed to be redistributed and resources appeared to be reallocated to governmental bodies, they were channeled to marginalized actors. A very small power producer (VSPP) in 2007, for example, sought to incentivize those independent and small scale to participate in a transition. Indeed, a (re-) configuration of power and resources by having small scale producers and communities was also strengthened by the government's Renewable Energy Development Fund (REDF) 2010.

Discussion and Conclusion

Inspired by the challenges facing methodological approach in social science, for example, longitudinal versus cross – sectional studies, particular point in time versus change & development over time, comparative versus in – depth investigation and statistical versus theoretical generalization, this paper is by and large about methodological contribution. Indeed, this is not just barely choosing the ones according to conventional wisdom or using them ritualistically. But rather, the paper

calls for a renewed attention on [re-] aligning/[re-] designing methodological approach in line with the issues' features and theoretical insights as analytical lens.

This historical – institutional approach was applied to disentangle complexities of Thailand's energy transitions between 2002 to 2012. Its robustness can be highlighted as follows. First, with the power of archives – unobtrusive data which were naturally generated from a process of social interaction – and combined insights between persistence and change, it was revealed that “*competition*” and among the actors “*tension*” caused by policies' misalignment significantly shaped a trajectory development of transition. Secondly, since it is used widely in historical studies for a reconstruction of narrative either to refine or to run counter conventional belief/findings, the archival approach provided opportunities to observe “*tension*” was eased and negotiated through a use of rhetoric. Such a series of rhetorical maneuver including “logos,” “pathos” and “ethos” was launched to delegitimize the existing logics that had long been governing Thailand's social and economic perception on the energy matters and simultaneously legitimize the new ones that had just been crafted. Essentially, this methodological approach also revealed that it was not just only a logical argument that counts. Rather, pathos and ethos rhetorics were also deployed to garner public support, ensure social acceptance and receive ethical approval. Finally, according to a synthesis between methodology and theory or “change and development over times” and “institutional dynamic & reconfiguration” respectively, it pointed out that a continuous [re-] configuration of the key involved parties was a key in accommodating and keeping a transition's momentum.

Building on the three key findings of this study — the role of actor competition and policy tension, the use of rhetorical strategies in shifting institutional logics, and the importance of continuous (re)configuration among stakeholders — several institutional strategies and policy tools can be suggested to help align Thailand's energy transition more closely with socio-economic goals. Table no.1 summarizes these practical insights, which are intended as complementary directions for policy and institutional design. These strategies offer preliminary pathways for improving institutional alignment between energy and socio-economic objectives, and invite further exploration in future research and practice.

Table 1

Institutional strategies and policy tools related to key findings

Key Finding	Institutional Strategy	Policy Tool
1. Actor competition and policy tension shape transition trajectories	Foster cross-ministerial coordination	Establish inter-ministerial energy transition working groups
2. Rhetorical strategies shift institutional logics and build legitimacy	Institutionalize inclusive stakeholder dialogues	Regular public consultations and multi-stakeholder forums
3. Continuous (re)configuration of stakeholder roles maintains transition momentum	Enable adaptive governance	Periodic policy reviews and reflexive governance mechanisms

Source: Author's reflection based on research findings.

Nevertheless, the study is not without limitations. Arguably, a constraint appears to lie in a lack of direct stakeholder interviews, which could have provided additional layers of insight into the lived experiences, motivations, and interpretations of the involved parties. While archival data allowed for an in-depth reconstruction of past institutional dynamics, it could have missed subtle shifts in perceptions and informal practices. Further research could build on this foundation by integrating stakeholder interviews, ethnographic observations or even oral history to triangulate findings and enrich understanding. Such a mixed-methods approach would not only deepen empirical grounding but also help capture the evolving nature of institutional work as it unfolds in contemporary settings.

In short, whilst archival research offers the opportunities to trace processes over times through unfolding narratives of change and persistence, combined insights between historical institutionalism and institutional work could further enhance this methodological approach by providing a framework for interpreting data both from structure & pattern and agency perspective. More importantly, this approach could potentially hold promise for broader applications across social science. Such an area as policy initiatives often involves complex institutional shifts over times, influenced by both formal structure and actions of the involved parties. By applying this methodological approach, it could help researchers to identify patterns of resistance, negotiation, and transformation on other policy domains.

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